Celebrations or Reparations?
The Virden Mine Riot of 1898

Virden, Illinois, Oct 12, 1898, waiting for the train.
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The name of F. W. Stewart's wife is lost to history. She failed to claim his body after he was lynched on November 8, 1898 at the town of Lacon, Illinois. The Chicago Daily Tribune, under the headline "LYNCHING A CLOSED CHAPTER", records this fact: "The negro had a wife and child at Toluca, but his wife refused to receive the body, and refused to have anything to do with the funeral." In this era of explicit journalistic racism, the article adopts a forlorn and resigned tone regarding the fate of both Stewart and his family: "The excitement in Marshall County over the lynching of Stewart, the Toluca negro, near Lacon on Monday morning, is rapidly subsiding. The disposition is to treat it as a closed chapter." [1]

But in reality, Mrs. Stewart was in no position to arrange for a funeral. She had witnessed the kidnapping of her husband by a mob of angry coal miners. He was dead, and her home and possessions were gone. The mob was enforcing a new "sundown" status for Toluca, where the Stewarts had stayed. (A sundown town is one that, by ordinance or strong unwritten sanction, does not allow any African-Americans to remain after sunset.) [2]

Gratuitously, the article records the fact that an individual named George Stewart (not F.W. Stewart), had an arrest record in nearby Peoria.

To find out why Toluca went sundown at this particular time, and why the white miners took action locally, we can look into a longer description in the Tribune, from the day of the lynching:

"Toluca is a mining town on the Santa Fé road, a place of recent and rapid growth, with mixed population of turbulent disposition. There are many foreigners and some negroes. Against the latter there has been considerable antipathy, which has been heightened by the events at Pana and Virden. The white miners grew more bitter against the colored men as they heard how the negroes were being imported from the South, and many colored men were forced to leave town because feeling was running so high. Among those who persisted in staying, however, was F. W. Stewart, a man of bad character and the victim of mob law today." [3]

So the "events at Pana and Virden" triggered this violent outburst. But these took place four weeks prior, and 130 miles further south in Illinois. Let us examine these events and see how they led to such bitter feelings. We need to know how a local labor organization became a lynch mob, when there was no local labor dispute. We need to know why Mr. Stewart would suddenly be required to leave town. Did his character or deeds have anything to do with his

punishment? We will need an analysis of historic labor events on a statewide scale.

After a difficult and bitter national coal strike, District 12 of the United Mine Workers reached an agreement with all Illinois coal operators in December, 1897. The contract had a good advance in pay (to 40 cents per ton), and provided union recognition and an 8-hour day. A union "checkweighman" would be a paid position in every mine, to make sure the weighing of the coal was fair. However, several operators in Virden, Pana, and Carterville abrogated the agreement, and by the fall of 1898, opened or tried to open their mines at the old rate, using black strikebreakers from Southern states.

On September 25, 1898, weeks before the final battle, a trainload of Birmingham miners headed to Virden. A stockade around the mine entrance had already been constructed by the manager Fred Lukins.

About 300 armed striking miners from central Illinois had congregated in the town expecting the train. They were organized and financed by the UMWA. The train slowed down near the station, but suddenly the plan was aborted, and the train sped past the station and the mine. It went on to Springfield, Illinois, without trying to land the miners in the stockade. The diverted train was met there by a crowd of angry miners and John Hunter, President of the Illinois UMWA, who brought the Birmingham miners to the local union hall. There, he and other leaders convinced them to return to Alabama, without having another go at Virden. The next morning, they departed for Birmingham, with the union paying the fares.

The organized UMWA miners were still patrolling the tracks around Virden. The local Macoupin County Enquirer presented the volatile situation as an adventure story, under the headline "Flocking to Virden":

"Late last night the word was passed to every mining town in the C. A. district that a trainload of negroes had been sidetracked at Centralia and transferred from passenger coaches to box. Cars. Three

Gillespie miners walked all the way to Carlinville to warn the local men. Every man as he started to work this morning was approached by a member of the antification committee: “No work today - Negroes- Virden!" was the warning. "All right be ready in a moment," came the instant response and in a short time 40 Carlinville miners were on the way to Virden. Thus it was all over the district. Mt. Olive sent 200 headed by "Gen." Bradley, over the J. 8. Staunton sent 200. Over 150 from Gillespie and Clyde went around by Alton and came up over the C. A. Chatham, Auburn, Girard, Green Ridge, Nilwood and Litchfield sent large delegations and every bit of track running into Virden is being patrolled north and south for miles. The executive committee of the Mine Workers Union is said to have $1,000. In hand with which to feed the visiting miners and thwart Operator Lukens. The men say there is more money where this came from.” [4]

The mine owner made another run with a load of Birmingham miners, their families aboard, on October 12, 1898. By this time there were two thousand striking UMWA miners in Virden. Shooting started as the train sped past the depot and stopped at the nearby stockade. A pitched battle ensued. Thiel Agency detectives from St Louis on the train-car platforms, (hired by the company) and Chicago detectives in the stockade (hired by the company) were on one side of the battle. Armed union miners in a field opposite the stockade were on the other side of the battle.

Eight UMWA miners and four guards were killed, with as many as thirty individuals wounded, including Birmingham strikebreaker, Ervin Ryan, shot in the head. The whole conflict lasted about ten minutes. The strikebreakers and families were not armed, and sheltered on the floor and under the seats, as every window in the five coaches was blown out. [4.5] The company-store manager, Jacob Eyster, tried to run to get medical help, but was shot and then beaten by miners. He survived.

The train engineer was wounded in the arm, and he sped out of Virden, on to Springfield, Illinois.

At Springfield, the injured and dead guards, as well as Ervin Ryan, were taken off the train. The rest of the Alabamans were promised care and transportation by the UMWA, and were taken to the union hall. Note that city and county civil authorities were not present at this point, and the UMWA was the de-facto administrator of these prisoners. Effectively, it had paramilitary jurisdiction in racial matters, as long as private property was not in the equation. The Sangamon County Historical Society quotes the Illinois State Register newspaper of Oct 13, 1898:

"Shivering and hungry in the third story of what is known as Allen's hall are huddled together about 106 negroes, men, women and children, practically prisoners of war, and in danger of their lives if they should attempt to assert their liberty. They are without anything to eat, and after today (Oct. 13, the day after the Virden battle – ed.) will be without a roof to shelter them, and are in danger of their lives if they get far from the hall. …Yesterday the mine workers' officials served notice that they would neither protect nor provide for the negroes after 6 o'clock, and soon afterward it began to be whispered about town that several of the negroes, who were with a former load that was taken from the train several days ago, would be lynched. An angry crowd, requiring the efforts of the police to restrain, surged about the door of the hall throughout the greater part of the day threatening mob violence." [5]

A pair of men tried to make a break from the union hall to the train station, but were caught by the white miners and badly beaten. A lynch mob gathered at the hall about that time, but the mayor of Springfield calmed them down and got the finances to send the Birmingham miners to St Louis on the train. There, they were abandoned without money, food, or warm clothes.

State troops were called in to Virden at this point, and there was no more violence. Governor Tanner instructed the troops not to allow any more trainloads of strikebreakers to land at the mine.

Inquests and investigations were conducted. Charges were filed against both company managers and some striking miners, but

nobody was convicted. The company acceded to the contract demands, and the mine re-opened shortly with UMWA workers.

Virden became at this point a sundown town. [6]

Over at the Pana mine, some other Birmingham strikebreaking miners had started working in September, 1898, and were living nearby in a stockade camp, but not in town. By October, 700 were working. In November, 1898 there was a major clash in Pana, between the Birmingham miners and local union men. Henry Stevens, the leader of the strikebreakers, challenged a combined force of the police and some union men who were trying to convince some of the strikebreakers to go home. Nobody was killed but a few strikebreakers were injured.

Troops were called in by Governor Tanner, and kept the peace for a while. Mine production continued until March of 1899. In that month, a resolution at the UMWA convention petitioned Tanner to "remove the State troops, disarm all Negroes in Pana, and force said operators and miners of Pana to make…a settlement." [7] Tanner did not act on that request.

The miners from Birmingham actually organized their own union organization and made an urgent appeal to Governor Tanner for protection, but it was not answered.

That same month, local residents of Pana requested the troops be withdrawn, and Tanner complied. On April 10, striking miners attacked again:

"In mid-April (Henry) Stevens led the black miners after a riot broke out following the accidental shooting of one of the union miners (by one of his friends, ironically, not by a black miner). The violence left five blacks and two whites dead, and at least six blacks wounded. The only white fatalities were the above-mentioned accidental death (at the hands of a white policeman) and the shooting of the son of the sheriff, most likely by a white man as well. In other words, the riot was really a minor massacre of Pana's black miner population." [8]

Some of the Birmingham miners left Pana at this time, to try their luck in Carterville, Illinois at another struck mine. The state troops were called back in. The mine operated until June, 1899 with African-Americans working. The mine was sold at this point, and the new owner settled with the UMWA on union terms, and the members were re-hired. All Birmingham miners were let go, and a minority went back home at this time, but most went on to Weir, Kansas, to work in yet another struck mine. This latter fact gives the lie to the notion (in Hicken, Keiser, and Feurer) that the strikebreakers were innocent or ignorant about the labor situation. If workers had just survived a horrible experience such as the Pana Riot, why would they then have another go at it? There had to be a desperate incentive here to avoid going home to the conditions of the South, even if it meant "taking chances with the world." A few holdouts stayed in town, but were soon driven out and had to migrate to Springfield, as Pana became a sundown town.

Tomb of Governor John Tanner. According to Sangamon Link: "Labor unions and others contributed nearly $25,000 to build a mausoleum for Tanner at Oak Ridge Cemetery. The monument, designed by Tiffany of New York and built by Culver Construction of Spring field, was dedicated on May 30, 1908. Among the speakers was UMW secretary-treasurer W. D. Ryan."

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

Illustration 1

We can see a clear pattern in Pana, Carterville, and Virden regarding the governor and the State of Illinois. Local authorities and the armed militia organized by the UMWA are given free rein to wreak violence and expel the blacks, strikebreakers or not, for a period of time. Then the state militia is sent in. Then it is removed again, until the expulsion is complete.

It would be fair to counter pose the usual governmental scab-herding to Virden and the mine wars. The usual pattern is for local, state, and national governments to side with the employer, and use any and all violence against strikers, to keep strikebreakers in the mine, mill, or plant. But here, there was no serious challenge to the property of the mine owner, and

production was resumed shortly. The killing was mostly within the working class. The racial hierarchy was maintained, and the strikers were given a temporary pass. As long as the white miners did not exercise their organizational and physical prowess against the mine and the railroad assets, they were protected by the governor and the courts. White supremacy was maintained.

With this wider historical perspective, now we can return to the lynching of F. W. Stewart in the northern part of Illinois.

The charge that incited the mob in Toluca was the rape of a white miner's daughter, Mary O'Brien. Of course, sexual animus was frequent in lynchings of black men, and sometimes accusations were recanted or proven false by subsequent events. In the Springfield Illinois Race Riot of 1908, for example, one African-American man was lynched simply because he was married to a white woman, and another, accused of attempted rape and murder, was almost certainly a random individual who was picked up the next morning on the street, after passing out drunk. He was executed in one day, after a perfunctory trial. Another Springfield rape victim later admitted to a grand jury that she had entirely made up the crime.

The Chicago Daily Tribune continues on Toluca:

"The O'Brien girl could give no more than a vague description of her assailant, but a bloodhound was secured, and being put on the scent started off on what appeared to be a hot trail. A hundred miners followed, and when the bloodhound finally led them to a shanty where Stewart was found it was with difficulty that the hotter heads were prevented from wreaking their vengeance upon him. Stewart protested his innocence with such earnestness, and apparent sincerity that many were persuaded against their wills and his life was spared. He was locked up, however. The authorities became alarmed by the mutterings of the miners, smuggled Stewart into a carriage, and hurried him to the county jail of Marshall County, at Lacon, ten miles west of Toluca, on the Illinois River, at the terminus of a spur of the Alton railroad. When the miners found on Saturday morning that Stewart had been put where he was believed to be safe in case he was found to be guilty, public sentiment grew so bitter that the Mayor

and City Marshal attempted to allay it by promising to visit Lacon to see if a confession could be extorted from Stewart. The result was a complete confession that sealed his fate." [9]

The Toluca miners organized a party of 100 men, broke into the Lacon jail with their picks and sledges, and took out Stewart:

"The other lynchers were waiting in grim silence beneath a white oak tree in the pasture. The end of the rope which had been about Stewart's neck was thrown over a limb and without giving him any opportunity to make a statement a dozen men seized it and hauled him into the air. The crowd lingered until it was sure that Stewart was dead and then returned to Toluca as it had come." [10]

Certainly this was not near a picket line, even though the actors were coal miners. The racialized and sexualized victimization is clear. The reader is actually encouraged to accede in the lynching. At Toluca, coal miners were incensed with the loss of white union men's lives in Virden, and the involvement of African-Americans in strikebreaking. However, Stewart was a just a black worker who would not get out of town during the miners' race fever at this time. He wasn't a miner, and certainly wasn't a strikebreaker. There was no labor conflict at Toluca and Lacon.

Somehow, the bloodhounds appeared at his house.

The journalist reasonably relates the lynching to Virden and Pana, but is very cavalier about the prospect of justice, in either legal or moral terms:

"Although many in Lacon deplore the lynching, there is a general impression that the negro was punished as he deserved, and no special effort is being made to discover the identity of the members of the mob. The Coroner's jury this afternoon returned a verdict that Stewart came to his death at the hands or persons unknown, and the Sheriff seems to think public sentiment would not justify him in making strenuous efforts to capture the lynchers. The people of Toluca are clannish, and any attempt to arrest men for what is

generally agreed to have been an act of retributive justice would, it is feared, be resented by the miners. The grand Jury may take action later on, but nothing is expected to come or it." [10.5]

There is no chicken-egg controversy over which came first, black actions or white actions. There is no employer in the equation, no question of rank-and-file militancy. There is only an effectively organized group of white miners, not redressing labor's grievances, or challenging exploitation. The men had the co-operation, active or passive, of the police, the sheriff, the legislature, the courts, the press, and the union leadership. They were organized on the basis of male whiteness, and took violent racial action.

We now understand the connection between the lynching, and the general labor conflict in the Illinois coal industry in the late 1890's. But labor historians have been remiss in resolving the "chicken and egg" problem: "Does racism in the coalfield cause African-American strikebreaking, or does African-American strikebreaking cause racism in the coalfield?"

It is my contention that these violent confrontations, including the lynching of Stewart, were paramilitary white riots, with the blessings of the white state. The fact that they were combined with strikes and picket lines makes the working class tragedy much deeper. The Toluca/Virden/Pana/Carterville hostility was just another thread in the historical narrative of American racism that began in 1619. But likewise, it was a monumental self-inflicted defeat for workers and their organizations. The working class was a house divided by white racism, and the rolling defeats of workers organizations have continued to this day.

A peaceful migration of black labor from the South, into the Illinois coal mines was prevented by these decisive incidents. We also lost the attendant racial integration, upward mobility for oppressed African-Americans, and working class solidarity. Actually, Toluca, Virden and Pana all became "sundown towns" exactly at this point in time. A combined labor front of black and white was unfortunately never built

in the UMWA. Instead, the Illinois coal fields were made safe for whites, and many thousands of coal jobs went to European immigrants instead.

Taking a longer perspective, the Virden Riot was a turning point between two historical moments in American race relations.

The first moment was the broken promise of "forty acres and a mule" right after the Civil War. Every newly emancipated family was to receive land and one mule with which to support itself. But Radical Reconstruction was completely overthrown. The formerly enslaved could not become farmers because they owned no land, and they were not industrial workers because they had little industry around them (except for coal-mining in some regions). Without land, there was no concrete economic emancipation to match the formal political emancipation of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. Materially, they were set adrift, and could not begin a new life in the South, because they lacked the only means that would have enabled it: the parceling out the Southern plantation lands, without compensation to the former slaveholders.

The second historic moment came with the race riots in East St Louis, Tulsa, and many other Northern cities, which were occasioned by the final northward Great Migration of black labor at the time of World War I. The dam broke because the pressure of Jim Crow had grown so great, while the relative absence of white men in Northern industry was occasioned by the contingency of World War I.

Virden stands midway between these two moments. Had the UMWA truly unified in 1898, perhaps the inevitable northward flow of African-American workers could have entered all the big industries and emerging unions more naturally, allowing workers to have greater racial solidarity and union power. I am saying that Virden bottled up the explosive pressure of African-Americans seeking work and a decent life in the North; not by itself, of course, but as a part of the virulent racism in the North. That pressure was diverted by the white workers back on the black workers, splitting the class itself. The Great Migration and its Virden precursor were not welcomed,

accommodated, and integrated into the class struggle. In fact, history requires us not to regard the United Mine Workers as a simple labor organization, or even a phenomenon of the working class. It was a male white supremacist organization which acted in the workplace.

Independently, and in vastly different contexts, both black workers and white workers were attempting to achieve stable jobs, security, better wages, minimal fairness and safety within the mining industry. Whites used the mechanism of non-sanctioned and legally marginalized labor union organizations. These rank-and-file de-facto organizations, spontaneously arose among those who were actually working in the mines. As conditions in the industry periodically worsened over the years due to falling coal prices, industrial panics, and depressions, these local organizations necessarily allied with each other, and sometimes gave rise to national organizations such as the Knights of Labor, The National Federation of Miners and Mine Laborers, and the UMWA. Wherever blacks were already working in the mines, they were either included at a lower union status, or evicted.

Moreover, women were never allowed in the mines because the larger society had the patriarchal tenet that all women and their children must be economically dependent on men. The organized men never struck to allow their wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters to be allowed work in the mines. They only struck for higher wages and better conditions for themselves. In fact, if a woman entered a mine or industrial plant, the organized men would often walk out. The capitalist gear turns within the wheel of patriarchy.

Blacks were not so fortunate as to get any level of independent economic semi-autonomy, effectively tolerated by the dominant class society for white men. Any organization of black workers was absolutely revolutionary, running counter to white supremacy as well as the privileges of private property. All-black unions emerged and disappeared, but were an ephemeral strand of the national development of union power. So, African-Americans were faced with labor organization of an “anti-union” nature: strikebreaking and under-bidding. This was concerted action of black labor as a whole,

which used the same informal peoples' methods as the white union organizing: communication and transportation networks, mutual aid, and solidarity. That it was subject to the popular sanction against "scabbing" misses the point: it was labor action to remedy the inability of the dual (white/black) labor market to support black life. So when an employer accepted African-Americans as replacements for white workers, as a temporary tactic or permanent strategy, the formerly-enslaved were naturally induced to "take chances with the world".

At the Union Miners Cemetery in Mount Olive Illinois, there is a yearly celebration honoring the Virden coal miners who are buried there. Mother Jones and Eugene Debs came to celebrate in different years, and Mother Jones is buried there, at her request. They, and some labor historians, have portrayed the Battle of Virden as a key victory for the Illinois district of the UMWA, for the U.S. union movement generally, and for the world working class.

This conflict did actually result in a temporary union victory because, after the battle, the Chicago-Virden Coal Company finally had to pay the 40-cents-per-ton rate that had already been agreed to by the other Illinois mining companies. The UMWA was now recognized widely by the operators, and an 8-hour day was established. Had the company prevailed at Virden and Pana, this would be at risk for the entire Illinois district. But while whites celebrated a boost in worker power and living standards, blacks mourned a *nakba*, a catastrophe of the people.

Where does this leave the coalfield in the aftermath of the riots? What were the demographics of coal in Illinois afterwards? David Markwell examined some official Illinois records (which record-keeping, ironically, was mandated by the Illinois legislature as a direct result of Virden.[11]) The new law required every Illinois coal miner now to be registered and demographically tracked. In "A Turning Point: The Lasting Impact of the 1898 Virden Mine Riot", Markwell writes:

"The Macoupin County Coal Miners Application Book of 1908 lists the names, nationalities, physical characteristics, and years of service in

the mines of 3,123 miners in the county. Over 1,500 miners are listed as being from eastern and southern European countries. Of all of the miners, only one African-American is registered. One yearns to learn more of how this sole African-American lived in these times, in this industry, in this place." [12]

Macoupin County, Illinois includes Virden, and the document was compiled ten years after the riot. So, if there is one African-American miner left in the entire county, we may ask: who benefited from the 40 cents per ton contract, and the secure establishment of the UMWA? This substantial advance was not for union members in general, but for white workers in particular.

Those who characterize Virden as a labor victory will cite the UMWA constitution, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race. But this provision was only progressive by comparison to most other union constitutions at the time, which expressly prohibited African-Americans as members. Indeed the UMWA had black members in Illinois, Ohio, and other northern states, but it was a small minority. They were working in the mines long before the UMWA was founded in 1890. The union had no choice but to be formally inclusive.

In the 1890 and 1900 census, of all Illinois coal miners, only 2 or 3 percent were black. [11.5] In Birmingham, the UMWA organized substantial numbers of black miners, but over time, these locals did not thrive.

North and South, African-Americans were not treated equally within the union, and most importantly, were not allowed, by 1898, to voluntarily migrate *en masse* to the Northern coalfields to live and work during times of labor peace. The fact that a small number of African-American miners in Illinois were working union members cannot be conflated into saying that there was "black and white on both sides" of the Virden conflict.

As for the presence of blacks in the Northern coalfields, and in the UMWA, we must have a realistic and nuanced perspective:

"But blacks did not receive equal treatment with whites even in the UMW. Many complaints surfaced in the union's paper, the United Mine Workers' Journal, regarding the inadequate representation of blacks at all levels of leadership. Also, negroes complained that they were discriminated against in the skilled and better paying positions. Promotion was a slow if not impossible process, and they charged that white union officials often ignored their grievances. Moreover, black and white miners frequently were segregated into separate locals especially in the South. Segregation also extended inside the mines, where the two races worked in separate sections, and often changed clothing in different washhouses. In most mining communities, housing, education, and other public facilities were segregated as well." [13]

The reason I am characterizing the Virden event as a white riot, on the occasion of a labor dispute, rather than a victory for all of labor (with some racial overtones), can be explicated from five glaring facts:

1. Opening fire on a trainload of men, women, and children can never be characterized under any circumstances as "labor solidarity" or preserving a picket line.
2. When the trainload of Birmingham miners, which was blasted out of Virden on October 12, went on to Springfield, Illinois, they were nearly lynched on October 13 by the UMWA miners in a secondary white riot, far from any picket line.
3. Collaborating with the state government, the local press, and the courts almost guarantees a labor organization failure, if its mission is to independently lead the working class. If the governor is on your side, you must be doing something wrong.
4. Were it strictly a conflict of labor and capital, the two thousand men gathered in Virden could have burned down the mine stockade. They could have organized to interfere with the construction of the stockade when it was first built. They could have tried to organize the Birmingham miners. They could have torn up the railroad tracks. The UMWA could have used its influence in Birmingham to bring African-American strike supporters up to Virden, with the prospect of settling some of them in Illinois after the strike were won.

5. The lynching of Mr. Stewart cannot be explained in terms of union solidarity. It was part of the expulsion of blacks from the coal fields by the union.

Historians, left and right, have taken a white perspective of the Virden Mine Riot, thereby failing to place it properly in the rolling defeats which characterize the American organized labor movement.

Herbert Gutman did not address Virden in detail, but he devotes a whole chapter in his book, “Work, Culture, and Society”, to Richard L. Davis' letters to the editors of the United Mine Workers Journal, the official union publication.

The editors of the UMWJ gave Davis a free rein to update the membership about happenings in his corner of Ohio whenever he saw fit, and he did write frequently. He was, after all, a working organizer (sometimes a board member) for the union organization, was unique in presenting an African-American point of view, and his loyalty to the organization was uniform. Gutman analyzes the many letters of Richard Davis and concludes that the UMWA was eminently successful in integrating blacks into the union [14] , and congratulates Davis for his patience with all the trials and tribulations of being a black miner, and also his patience with the white leadership.

Richard L Davis
https://remarkableohio.org/index.php?/category/1770

But Gutman is nearly silent on one spectacular exchange of seven letters between Davis and a white contributor named Glasgow.

Davis had made a plea for more black leadership in the union, and especially more paid positions. (Gutman does quote from one of Davis' letters in this series, from June 1, 1893, and surmises: "That his plea was answered affirmatively is known. Davis's election to national office and that of other Negroes to lesser offices is a matter of record." [15]) Glasgow responded, accusing Davis of "special-pleading" for his race, and even of self-promotion.

They then commence an extremely heated, but polite exchange, with all of its Victorian formality. Glasgow at one point asks Davis to please let us take time to "examine the condition of your race", a slam which exults in the degraded position of African-Americans. Davis tells him that he has had all the time he needs. Davis makes an eloquent case for affirmative action within the organization and for a cessation of second-class treatment of black members in the mines.

Now, every newspaper or magazine cannot publish every letter, so it is an editorial decision as to which letters should appear. The editors also have the call on which letters are published in counterpoint to a given contribution. The editors of the United Mine Workers Journal consciously permitted this debate, probably under a policy of "fairness"-- fairness for both a racist, and for one of their own organizers, who piped up a little too much.

Gutman also does not explain why an integrated organization could be less than sensitive to its black members, as it jokingly describes the Virden riot in song:

> "On The Banks of the Railroad
>
> (To the tune of "On the Banks of the Wabash.")
>
> Away down in our homes in Alabama,
> Us coons we were contented to stay.
> 'Til Mr. Lukens come and told us what he would give us
> If we would come with him to Virden far away.
> When we arrived in Virden Sunday morning
> We found that things were not what Lukens say,

The miners were all lined up along the railroad
And you bet us coons was glad to get away.

CHORUS

The moon is shining brightly along the railroad,
And the miners are situated there to stay
The candle lights are gleaming in the stockade;
Mr. Lukens thinks he's having things his way.
He told us the miners were all in Cuba,
And there wasn't only eight men there to stay;
He didn't tell us what a pen he'd put us into,
When he got us down to Virden far away,
Then goodbye to Mr. Lukens, we are bound for Alabama there to stay;
If Mr. Lukens ever comes to Alabama
We will show him what us coons will do that day."

United Mine Workers Journal, October 13, 1898. [16]

Getting back to the Virden situation, R. L. Davis actually commented on it in one letter. He writes:

"I have been a constant watcher as to the welfare of the U.M.W, of A. and noticing the troubles now existing in the Sucker State among our craftsmen, prompts me to say a word at least. I am indeed sorry to see the State of affairs as exists there, and yet it teaches us that one lesson seemingly so hard to learn by a great many of us, viz., to organize, I do not mean to organize against the black man, as they are now doing, for that will do no good nor will there any good results accrue from it, and fight it as you may the result will be the same, I have watched it in the past and have never known it to fail. I would advise that we organize against corporate greed, organize against the fellow who, through trickery and corrupt Legislation, seeks to live and grow fat from the sweat and blood of his fellow man. It is these human parasites that we should strive to exterminate, not by blood or bullets, but by the ballot, and try as you may it is the only way. You can't do it by trying to exterminate the negro or big black buck

niggers, as they were referred to a few weeks ago through the columns of The Journal. I assure anyone that I have more respect for a scab than I have for the person who refers to the negro in such a way, and God knows than a scab I utterly despise. The negro North has no excuse, or very few excuses, for scabbing, but the negro South has lots of them, and while I give the North a great deal of credit, I fear that I make a mistake, for in many places even in the North, no matter how good a union man he may be, he cannot get work only as a blackleg. And in the South he can work almost anywhere provided he is willing to be the other fellow's dog, and I don't mean the employer alone, but the white laborer as well." [17]

The "Sucker State" is a nickname for Illinois, and a "blackleg" is a strikebreaker. The last sentence in the quote refers to the practice of white miners in the South actually hiring desperate blacks as subcontracted workers, for next to nothing (postbellum). Davis goes on:

"I dare say that you seldom or never hear of negroes being brought into a locality to break a strike in which both white and black worked together, and even if they were you always found the negro on the side of right. Hence, I say treat the negro right and he will treat you right. I earnestly hope to see the miners of Illinois win their battle, for I suppose they are like miners elsewhere. Their pittance is already too small." [18]

So, Davis is loyal and diplomatic to the very end, but he does say that the union should not "organize against the black man, as they are now doing." This was his opinion of the situation in Virden, dated October 10, 1898, two days before the final conflagration, and published one day after. He put it more bluntly in an earlier 1894 letter:

"Now if there is anything I do despise it is a blackleg, but in places in this country that they will not allow the negro to work simply because of his black skin, then I say boldly that he is not a blackleg in taking your places. He is only doing his plain duty in taking chances with the world." [19]

It is interesting to see what Gutman makes of these comments from Davis. He quotes much of the above and puts an asterisk after it. In his note he begs us to contrast with Davis' conclusions "those of certain other contemporaries concerned with the relations between Negro and white workers." He counter-poses a Chicago newspaper editorial opinion ("not a race fight at all, but a labor fight"), and the fervent wish of a clergyman (that the white workers of Virden would learn from their mistakes). One would have expected Gutman to present countervailing facts that show Davis to be wrong. [20]

Herbert Hill sums up Gutman's use of R. L. Davis:

"Hence, during a period of racial occupational eviction with organized white labor displacing blacks in many trades and industries, the ambivalence that characterized the position of Davis and other blacks in the UMW, torn as they were between the hope that black loyalty to the organization would result in equal treatment and the constant need to protest against the racist practices of the white working class and the union itself. This ambivalence, (although hardly reflected in Gutman's selection), is manifest in Davis' letters, which accurately describe the racial tensions in the coal fields and in the union. Those black miners, who had given much to the UMW in the hope that it would become an effective force for racial justice, were to become increasingly disappointed as the first years of the twentieth century passed." [21]

One can get a fair idea of the relationship between Richard L. Davis and the United Mine Workers, by contrasting his personal life trajectory with that of his boss, Michael D. Ratchford, National President of the union in 1897-1898.

Both were born in poverty (Richard in Roanoke, Va., Michael in County Clare, Ireland), and both began working at an early age (Richard at 8, Michael at 12). Richard was a member of the Rendville, Ohio local, and did some organizing work for the national organization in Ohio, West Virginia, and the deep South. Michael mined in Ohio and was elected President of his local in 1890. He did organizing work in Ohio

beginning 1893. Richard was elected to the Executive Board of District 6 in 1890, but was still a rank-and-file working miner up through 1896. Michael became President of District 6 in 1895. Later that same year, he was elected national UMWA President. Richard was elected to the National Executive Board in 1896 and 1897 for two one-year terms, the first African-American. Still, he was a working miner. (After 1900, there would not be another of his race on the National board for 76 years.) He died at age 37 in 1900, in poverty, of "lung fever". He had been blacklisted for over a year. He disagreed with many of his African-American co-workers over the prospect of forming a black local, which he vehemently opposed as a loyal UMWA member.

Michael resigned from the union in 1898 to serve on the United States Industrial Commission, and in 1900 (the same year Richard died) he jumped to become Ohio Commissioner of Labor Statistics. He jumped from there to become Commissioner of the Ohio Coal Operators, 1909-13. Then he jumped again to be Commissioner of the Illinois Coal Operators, 1913-27, sitting across the bargaining table from his former friends. He died in 1927 at age 67. Compared to Richard, Michael got about 30 more years of life, a great deal more comfort, and the opportunity to undo whatever service he had rendered to the UMWA. [22]

Much writing on Virden originates with Victor Hicken's "The Virden and Pana mine wars of 1898", published in 1959. It is a short, simplified account which ignores race altogether:

"To the [union] the issue which arose was one which scarcely involved color; instead, it was centered on the simple economic fact of imported cheap labor." [23]

Any time you hear somebody use the term "cheap labor" you know you are dealing with a racist. Labor has no inherent price, and can be performed by any race. Inaccurately, Hicken limits the captivity on October 13 of the strikebreakers to the train sitting on the tracks in Springfield, skipping their later captivity in the union hall, with the lynch mob outside.

John Keiser wrote the classic piece on the nineteenth century Illinois mine wars, "Black Strikebreakers and Racism in Illinois, 1865-1900". It is absolutely typical of the great majority of academic opinion:

"It is the contention of this article that racial antagonism in Illinois between 1865 and 1900 stemmed, to a large extent, from the use of black strikebreakers." [24]

For Keiser, this chicken-egg controversy is resolved clearly: black strikebreaking came first and racial antagonism was the result. Pervasive northern racism, as a psycho-socio-economic apparatus, presumably did not mediate these particular fights. He conveniently offloads the racial responsibility from the UMWA by treating the operators' strikebreaking actions as race-based aggression in the labor-management arena, to which the labor organization would naturally respond. Then, since African-Americans were complicit in the strikebreaking, the UMWA would also respond to the black race as a whole, statewide. But this is faulty logic, because an organization cannot hold an entire race responsible for the actions of a specific set of people.

Keiser gives the following example of his logic in the case of an earlier mine conflict:

"In February, 1874, for example, some three hundred striking white miners went to the mine of Robert W. Lemen in St Clair County to persuade twenty-five black miners to stop working. The strikers were demanding four cents a bushel and the blacks were working for three cents. The white miners responded by destroying the shanties and belongings of the black miners and driving some of them from the county. On February 21, 1874, Governor John Lourie Beveridge sent one hundred rifles and ammunition to be used to prevent further violence." [25]

Keiser recites this precursor to Virden as just another example of racial antagonism in the local coal mines, without even realizing that the black miners, by his own description, were merely unorganized

local workers who were set upon. Keiser does not acknowledge the racism on the ground in Illinois which effectively kept black miners from peacefully and gradually migrating from the South as individuals over the preceding years.

Rosemary Feurer's “Remember Virden! The Coal Mine Wars of 1898-1900” is more judicious than Keiser, but holds to the same historical characterization. We are still asked to regard Virden as one of the greatest labor victories of all time, albeit marred by the inconvenient admixture of racial conflict:

“Despite the radicalism of the miners, black miners continued to be excluded with the complicity of the miners union. But the 'Victory at Virden,' as the miners termed it, was marred by the vicious racial conflict that was also a legacy of these events. Soon after 1898, Virden and Pana became "sundown" towns, and African-American unionized miners were threatened despite the UMWA's official integrated status. Further, the racialized memory of the events was conflated with the class conflict story. In fact, in popular memory, the key efforts of African-American unionized miners in bringing about the victory were forgotten, and eventually their role was completely erased, replaced by conceptualizations of the events as a solely racial conflict. Did the racialized retelling of this story limit the radicalism that flourished in the area, or did it strengthen white workers' determination to use the power of the state to build their unions and white workers' power? While the numbers of African-American unionized miners climbed steadily in the first decade of the century, we need to know more about how those African-American unionized miners sought to open up the union to their full inclusion.” [26]

Four things about this quote: 1. Why should we believe that the story of Virden only became racialized in the re-telling? Mr. Eyster was treated poorly by the striking miners, but not killed. Mr. Lukins and his mine were not harmed. But the working families on the train were almost blasted off the face of the earth. Sometimes historians get into a post-modern habit of equating one “story” with another “story”, abandoning the facts. Virden is indeed a story of class struggle, and also a story of color; it's just a question of which color of the working

class broke ranks first. 2. Feurer is conflating one simple (un-cited) datum, the membership of seven African-American miners in the Virden local, with something far more significant: widespread loyal, enthusiastic participation of black union miners in this riot. I call this the "myth of black shooters on the tracks" because I have never seen any evidence of it. Feurer reproduces a photo of a group of people, standing outside the temporary morgue in Virden, and there is a black face among them. Was he a shooter? Was he even a miner? There is just no evidence of forgotten or unacknowledged "key efforts of African American unionized miners" in this riot. No African-Americans were among the dead and wounded on the union side. If there were black shooters on the tracks during the Virden riot, they effectively blasted away their own jobs and homes. 3. There are two rhetorical questions about radicalism, collaboration, and racism posed by Feurer in this quotation. They should be answered. But they only seem a puzzle because Feurer assumes that these tendencies cannot coexist. 4. Markwell's statistics on the Virden area, cited above, answer Feurer's plea for more knowledge about the prevalence of black miners after the riot: they disappeared.

David Markwell has his own analysis, similar to Hicken, Keiser and Feurer:

"The primary significance of the incident at Virden is that it marks the beginning of the end of the feudalism that characterized the Illinois coalfields and the late nineteenth-century industrialism in general." [27]

"The Illinois perspective was solidified by the events in 1897 and 1898. The people of Illinois during this era took actions which enabled the UMWA to become the largest and most powerful labor union in the nation." [28]

"Through the next several decades, the incident at Virden grew to be a larger than life occurrence for Illinois miners. They saw direct correlations between the miners that fell that day and their higher standard of living." [29]

"...the events in Virden had national implications and solidified the gains made by the UMWA during the 1897 strike..." [30]

Markwell is unique in purveying an idealist notion of the "Illinois perspective", an entity which presumably lives off in Platonic heaven somewhere, but has concrete influence on real people and events. Likewise, most historians would not confuse feudalism with 19th century American capitalism. Although his own original investigation has uncovered the truth about the disappearance of black miners from Macoupin County, he sticks to the heroic interpretation of Virden.

The power and the economic gains that accrued to the UMWA after Virden were not from deep and long-lasting solidarity across racial boundaries; they resulted from the effective use of paramilitary force. The union challenge to the rights of private property was conditioned on a temporary alliance with a Republican governor, and did not last. The union advantages secured by Virden and Pana were not to be enjoyed by the loyal African-American unionists who were ousted from Illinois. The brittle patriotic masculinism within the organization could not stand up against the left-right disputes of later years, nor could it stand up against the bureaucratic dictatorship of John L. Lewis.

Finally, there is the Mother Jones Museum website. [34] It deals with Mother Jones' life more generally, but also links to a "Virden Mine War Tour" [35] which guides the viewer through the town of Virden, explaining various sites of the riot, while describing the events. It is authored by the Mother Jones Heritage Project. It describes the Virden Memorial, dedicated in 2006, which is a bronze bas-relief panoramic depiction of the battle. The tour narrative takes a familiar tack:

"The 1898 Virden mine war was an epic in the history of struggle for union rights. It became a miners union triumph in Illinois after almost 40 years of effort to secure a union contract." [36]

As to the racial character of the battle, this story conflates and glosses:

“African-Americans in Illinois continued to struggle to gain access to jobs in mining. Most mine owners in central Illinois continued to prefer to hire immigrants and the other battles, particularly in Pana, brought out more racism than solidarity. In 1900 there were still 6 African-American mining families living and most owning their homes in Virden; by 1910 most were gone. But overall, their percentages in mining jobs in Illinois increased.” [37]

Coded and cryptic language again approaches the possibility of black shooters on the union side:

“Seagraves [artist of the bas-relief] also placed an African American unionist as part of the battle. It's also fitting that in Seagraves' depiction, the African American miner seems to be assisting and looking over his shoulder, but not the center of the struggle for justice. In the end, the commemorations made African-Americans into victims and strikebreakers, not protagonists of the story.” [38]

The African-American miner in the memorial is helping to carry a wounded white comrade from the battlefield, and has no gun. But why criticize previous commemorations for failing to acknowledge black shooters, if the effect of the riot was to expel black miners from the local coalfield? It is widely acknowledged that Virden became a sundown town at this point in time. This catastrophe was not a struggle for justice, and without citations, we cannot accept that African-American protagonists were at the center of the union assault.

As with race, so with sex:

“While guns and blood might be thought of as a particular male legacy, women in the Illinois coalfields also felt they were part of the legacy of the Virden mine war. By the 1930s, women's auxiliaries formed the heart of a militant struggle for democracy in the coal fields of Illinois.” [39]

As we jump 30 plus years into the future, we are asked to forget that this 1898 battle was strictly a white male enterprise.

So, what about Mother Jones herself? Why would she make a public request to be buried, when her time came, with the Virden "martyrs" who lay in the Mount Olive, Illinois Miners cemetery? This website is quite facile on this point:

"Mother Jones did not know the story of Virden in detail." [40]

No citation is given, and we would be credulous to believe that Mother Jones did not know what took place at Virden, and its effect on African-American coal miners.

It may seem unwise to challenge an icon of the labor movement, but Mother Jones put herself in the company of those who opened fire on a group of African-American men, women, and children. Likewise Eugene Debs, another icon, celebrated at Virden, and was a founder of the American Railway Union, which constitutionally barred African-Americans. Solidarity with these attackers promoted a whitewashing of the real history of the Illinois coalfields.

As late as October 12, 2019, Virden was still being celebrated by the Illinois Labor History Society. An Amtrak train from Chicago was organized to make a special stop at Virden, Illinois, for a *"Battle of Virden" Oct. 12 Labor History Tour* [41] of labor sites in that town and Mount Olive, Illinois, where the Union Miner's Cemetery and Mother Jones Museum are located.

A more realistic model for Virden, compared to all of the above, is this: The increasing general racism in the late 1800's, North and South, led to greater cohesion within local black communities, and a breakdown of the popular sanction against strikebreaking. Black strikebreaking is the result, and not the cause of racial exclusion in the community, and conflict at work. Strikebreaking was a natural part of the African-American resistance to the oppression from the larger white community.

This model shows greater explanatory value in the work of Whatley, Ward, and Arnesen. Whatley finds that the failure rate of strikes from

1890 to 1929 was strongly correlated to the volume of immigration into the United States. African-American strikebreaking was positively correlated to the general level of strikes and inversely related to immigration, suggesting that blacks were used when immigrants were unavailable. [42] These results play out against a background of the following facts: most black strikebreaking was: 1) in the North, 2) at the time of Virden, was in a few industries, 3) spread to other industries after 1910, and 4) was a factor in almost every major US labor-management conflict [43]

Relevant to the Virden scenario, Whatley notes:

"The fact that most strikebreaking by African-Americans occurred in industries that had southern branches suggests that African American strikebreakers were arbitraging the split between northern and southern labor markets." [44]

Whatley observes that: "...an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 African-American strikebreakers were used to defeat the nationwide steel strike of 1919...According to the Interchurch Report, 'the successful use of strikebreakers' was a main cause of the failure of unions, and these strikebreakers were 'principally Negroes'. (Commission of Inquiry, Interchurch World Movement 1920:177)." [45]

This crescendo of racial failure within labor organizations culminated in the disaster of the 1919 national steel strike. In the words of George Rawick:

"... one of the central issues facing the working class movement from the end of the Civil War to the turn of the century was the question of the unity of the working class. While there were moments of successful joint struggle, and blacks played prominent roles at times in the union movement, these efforts were to fail, and blacks were to be excluded from the union movement. It is also clear that this exclusion of blacks was crucial in limiting the development of the movement." [46]

Ward likewise feels the necessity to explain the strikebreaking of African Americans, rather than treat it like a personal preference of the individual workers and exogenous to history:

"The contention here is that the process of racializing labor during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries affected not only the type of labor black people could procure, it also systematically eliminated them from the larger labor movement and virtually forced them into "anti-labor" roles such as strikebreaking. As the labor movement gained significant momentum throughout Illinois, black workers faced with the decision to be a part of the labor movement was not easy—while other workers contended with nineteenth century labor issues such as unionization, better working conditions and the eight hour work day, black workers were also entangled within a struggle for citizenship, voting rights, and the right to work and live where they chose. " [47]

The historic nadir of black power at this time was especially difficult for rural Illinoisans:

"Once welcomed in smaller locations throughout Illinois, by the last decade of the nineteenth century "troublesome" African Americans were demonized, and through a variety of means (mostly extra-legal), black populations left for urban environments where they were likely to find supportive black communities." [48]

Arnesen likewise takes a material and objective view of African-American strikebreaking:

"Given the racially exclusionary barriers erected by many white unions and the racial division of labor that confined blacks to inferior positions, strikebreaking by African Americans could naturally serve as the threat white unionists perceived it to be. It also represented something that most white workers, as well as black leaders, were scarcely prepared to comprehend: black strikebreaking was nothing less than a form of working-class activism designed to advance the interests of black workers and their families. In many instances a collective strategy as much as trade unionism, strikebreaking afforded

black workers the means to enter realms of employment previously closed to them and to begin a long, slow climb up the economic ladder. As a strategy, of course, strikebreaking was not without its drawbacks, as many contemporaries, white and black, pointed out. The strikebreaking option was always a calculated risk. Black workers' value to white employers rested largely on their ability to check the power of white workers; they remained highly vulnerable in the labor market, often subject to the harsh—or even harsher—conditions that had prompted whites to organize in the first place. They also exposed themselves to potential or real violence at the hands of strikers and their sympathizers, who bitterly resented their intrusion into local industrial conflicts. Many white workers rejected outright the legitimacy of black workers' grievances about racial exclusion from unions and employment. Choosing instead to blame the victim, they not only refused to see strikebreaking as a form of working-class activism, but often proved resistant to recognizing or appreciating more familiar forms of activism—namely, labor organizing—in which black workers might engage." [49]

Ward, Whatley, and Arnesen thus explain black strikebreaking as a dynamic variable in American social history, along with the mutually determined variables of union power, employer power, and the role of the state.

In contrast to the Virden, Pana, and Toluca conflicts, the mine wars of 1898 had different results in a southern Illinois coal town named Carterville. After the initial conflict, which cost 6 African-American lives, strikebreakers worked continuously for over 30 years, successfully established themselves in the mines, created a stable community, and eventually joined the UMWA. They were not displaced.

Mine owner Samuel Brush imported black strikebreakers from Sweetwater Tennessee. They arrived May 20, 1898 in the new all-black company town named Dewmaine, next to all-white Carterville. Some white miners worked as strikebreakers too, and production continued until May 1899, when Brush tried to import forty of the

Birmingham strikebreakers, with their families, that had been ejected from Pana.

"As the train came to a rest, shots rang out. Anna Bush Karr died instantly in the gunfire. Twenty more miners were injured. A sensational trial later occurred in Vienna, but ended without convictions of the nine accused men. Mining-related violence continued periodically." [50]

In July, 1899, there was fighting between whites and blacks in Carterville, with no dead and a few wounded. The governor called in troops. On September 11, troops were removed, and on September 17, a party of blacks with an armed escort tried to walk to the train station on personal business. They were met at the station by 30 armed whites, and they retreated down the tracks toward home.

"One of the black men fired at their pursuers, and the miners responded by returning fire. Five of the blacks died instantly, and several others were injured. The remaining group made it back to the mine, and nearly 200 blacks stormed the mine's storehouse, where there were guns, but Brush's son prevented them from arming themselves." [51]

Troops were called back in. Three whites were charged, none convicted. Production continued under operator Brush until 1906.

Mary Beth Roderick interviewed some descendants of Dewmaine's residents in 2011, for a remarkable short history of that town in *The Southern Illinoisan* newspaper:

"By 1906, Brush had sold his mine to the New Jersey-based Madison Coal Company. The coal mine became known as No. 8. Most of the African-American coal miners eventually unionized, and their wages continued to rise.

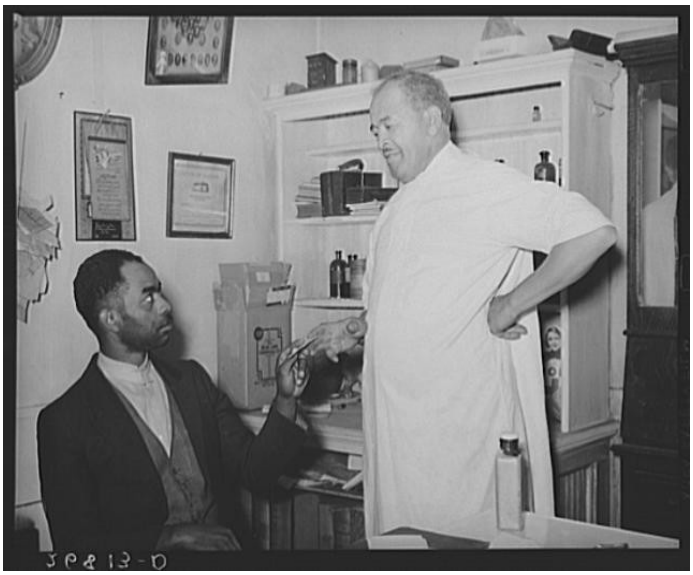
Madison No. 8 mine at Dewmaine.

In 1901, a U.S. Post Office opened in Dewmaine. A small school house, segregated for the few white and majority of blacks, offered education to the coal miners' children. A company store, owned by the mining company, soon had competition. A grocery store, a drug store and a dairy owned by the Dantzler family, made trips to Carterville less necessary.

Two churches, the Mount Zion Baptist Church and an African Methodist Episcopalian church, Wayman Chapel, were organized. Residents developed a nickname for Dewmaine, "Greenville," named so because the company homes were uniformly painted green with white trim.

The formation of a thriving community did not go unnoticed. Fisk University business students, visiting the area to assess opportunities for southern blacks, reported back to Tennessee of Dewmaine's potential.

Andrew Springs, at graduation from Fisk



Dr Springs, giving a prescription in his Colp office

Ned Goodin, traveling by bicycle and train, became an informal ambassador for the community as he lobbied for new residents from the northern counties of Alabama.

Dr Springs, practicing in Colp

The Rev. C. C. Phillips, a superintendent with the Baptist Church, encouraged newcomers. He persuaded a newly graduated physician, Andrew Springs and his wife, Birdie McLean Springs, also a doctor, to set up a practice in Dewmaine. With their arrival in 1908, offering access to modern medicine, the community thrived. … A two-story building was built east of the Springs' medical office. The lower floor held the grade school, and the second floor housed the high school. A female teacher, Wardell Jones, who taught and supervised the first eight grades, firmly asserted her students would be prepared to go to 'anybody's college.' " [52]

Reading Roderick's oral history, we cannot be more impressed with the contrast that Dewmaine posed to the lynching near Toluca, the massive attack on the train at Virden, and the expulsions and murders in Pana:

"Amanda Kirby, 92, was brought to Dewmaine when she was 8 months old. Her father mined in No. 8 and later turned to farming. Although money was tight, Kirby remembers having plenty of food on the table, with enough to share with neighbors. The girls in the family cut corners by using Vaseline as a hair treatment, rather than the store-bought products by Madam C.J. Walker.
She also recalled walking to Carterville with her mother to shop. "A parrot, perched on a front porch, was trained to call out (the n-word) as we walked by. We spent our money there and that was it," Kirby said.
Carterville, like Herrin, was a "sunset town," which legally prohibited blacks from remaining in those communities after dark. The practice was not uncommon." [53]

The death-knell for Dewmaine came in 1923, however, when Madison Coal closed its mine:

"The post office closed in 1931. The last high school class, under the direction of Professor Penn, graduated in 1930.

The grade school remained for a number of years until it was closed, and the children were transferred to Attucks School in Colp. By the mid-1960's, one woman inhabited a home in what was once Dewmaine. Today, it is listed as a ghost town in articles and books. To anyone other than historians and longtime residents of the Carterville area, Dewmaine might as well never have existed. Its location is not easily found, nor readily identified. The name of the once-promising community does not get mentioned in casual conversation."[54]

In summary, Illinois District 12 of the UMWA organized and financed a paramilitary white supremacist militia at Virden, which violently ejected African-Americans from the local mining industry, and effectively kept them out for 20 years. This period of great coal industry expansion was made safe for European immigrants to the exclusion of black laborers migrating from the American South. Europeans from 5000 miles away were accepted as co-workers in an improved work environment, while African-Americans from 500 miles away were subject to pogroms.

Instead of commemorations and celebrations of Virden, reparations are called for. That process would probably have to be initiated by African American organizations or ad hoc groups. [55]

Notes

[1] Chicago Tribune, Nov. 9, 1898, Page 3.

[2] Loewen, pp 157-165, describes Virden and Pana in particular. Loewen notes in his comprehensive book "Today my estimate for the number of sundown towns in Illinois alone stands at 507. That is two-thirds of all the towns in the state! A similar proportion went sundown in Oregon, Indiana, and various other northern states." (p. vii)

[3] Chicago Daily Tribune, Nov. 8, 1898, page 1.

[4] Macoupin County IlGen Web, https://ilmacoupin.whalen-family.org/mines/1898newspapercoverage.html

[4.5] Lupton, p. 673.

[5] Sangamon County Historical Society, paragraph 30.

[6] Feurer, page 14.

[7] Markwell, "The Best Organized..." p. 72.

[8] Lenstra, p 23.

[9] Chicago Daily Tribune, Nov. 8, 1898, page 1.

[10] Ibid.

[10.5] Ibid.

[11] Markwell, "The Best Organized..." pp71-2, pp90-91.

[11.5] "In the 1890 census, the first in which black coal miners were listed in their own category, five hundred fifty six African-American male residents of Illinois were listed as coal miners. This represented 2.5% of the total miners in the state. In the 1900 census, 1,368 African-American male residents of Illinois were listed as coal miners. This represented 3.6% of the total miners in the state." Markwell, "The Best Organized ...", page 57, note 40, from US Census data.

[12] Markwell, "A Turning Point..." p. 224

[13] Foner and Lewis p. 118.

[14] Gutman, p.192. Many of Richard Davis's letters to the *United Mine Workers' Journal* are collected in Foner and Lewis, pp119-176.

[15] Gutman, p 152.

[16] Reproduced in Foner and Lewis, p 217-8.

[17] R. L. Davis to the United Mine Workers' Journal, October 10, 1898, reproduced in Foner and Lewis, p 175.

[18] Ibid, p 175.

[19] Davis to the editor, UMWJ, cited in Gutman, p. 153.

[20] Gutman, Noted by asterisk on page 179-80.

[21] Hill, p. 168. A definitive critique of Gutman's assertion of a well integrated UMWA is to be found in the Herbert Hill article. It generated a symposium of comment and a final rejoinder from Hill.

[22] For Ratchford: Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_D._Ratchford, accessed 1/25/2020. For Davis: Gutman, pp 121-208, and Foner and Lewis, p 176.

[23] Hicken, main page paragraphs 31 and 14.

[24] Keiser, p. 315.

[25] Ibid, p. 315.

[26] Feurer, p 14.

[27] Markwell, “A Turning Point...", p 211.

[28] Markwell, "The Best Organized...", p 74.

[29] Markwell, "The Best Organized...", p 72.

[30] Markwell, "The Best Organized...", p 73.

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[34] Mother Jones Museum Website

[35] Mother Jones Heritage Project, Virden Mine War Tour.

[36] ibid, Stop 2, paragraph 1.

[37] ibid, Stop 9, paragraph 7.

[38] ibid, Stop 9, paragraph 8.

[39] ibid, Stop 9, paragraph 9.

[40] ibid, Stop 9, paragraph 10.

[41] Illinois Labor History Society, pp 12-13.

[42] Whatley, pp 540-42.

[43] ibid, p 529.

[44] ibid, p 538.

[45] ibid, p 527.

[46] Roediger and Smith, p 127-8.

[47] Ward, p ii.

[48] Ibid, p 262.

[49] Arnesen p. 322.

[50] Roderick, paragraph 5, 6.

[51] Lupton, p. 674.

[52] Roderick, paragraphs 7-12, 14.

[53] Roderick, paragraphs 19-21.

[54] Roderick, paragraphs 29-31.

[55] Only suggestions would be appropriate in this essay. The United Mine Workers of America could lead the way by apologizing to the African-American community for its paramilitary racist actions at Virden, Pana, and Carterville, and for characterizing these actions as labor solidarity. ("We now know why African-Americans crossed our picket lines in years past; we know that we caused it by our own actions, and that it was the right thing for them to do. Our organization was not in 1898, and is not today, a truly anti-racist organization. Only an anti-racist, anti-sexist organization can truly call itself a union of labor. We will strive to become a labor union.") Also, the lynching at Lacon should be acknowledged. The union should be the first to ask labor organizations to stop celebrating Miners Day on October 12. The union should direct most of its future organizing efforts towards communities of color, and fund several history scholarships for children of members of color. The Illinois State Labor History Society should stop sponsoring historical tours of Virden, and correct the record in its publication *The Reporter.* The city of Virden, Illinois should take down its inaccurate Battle of Virden Monument, and artist David Seagraves could offer a replacement honoring African-American labor. Financial reparations are more difficult to

assess at this time, and perhaps need to be a part of the national reparations movement.

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